

A SITUATION OF EXTREME HOPELESSNESS

A young drifter who wants a swim, dives off a bridge and finds himself suspended in mid-air. Since he is naked and within city limits, an inquiry is made, revealing that the river won't have him, it's sick and tired of human filth, this guy's the last straw, he hasn't bathed in days and has a suspicious open sore on his penis.

Unknown to the city council, though, a certain chunk of air has loved -- or rather, lusted after -- the young man from the instant it kissed his naked body still wet from his mother's juices. It's been following him all his life, just waiting. Now, though it claims to be doing the river a big favor, it's only too glad to seize the young man in its lecherous embrace.

Overnight, he is transformed from a worthless neo-hobo without ambition or moral fiber, into a textbook refutation of the theory of free will.

It's no consolation. The local chamber of commerce has given him 24 hours to get dressed or be blasted out of the sky. The 6 o'clock news calls his "A Situation of Extreme Hopelessness." He must either heal his sore and hope for a rain mixed with soap, or learn to eat, drink, and make pants out of thin air.

ENCOUNTERING THE SOUL-MATE

A man dressed as a raven leaps out of a tree, hops to a sunbathing girl, and starts pecking at her cleavage.

"Stop it, stop it, you're intruding on my sense of desolation and impending doom!" she cries, sitting up at once.

"Oh, you're interested in Fear!" the man croaks delightedly. "I have a PhD in Dread. My dissertation was Claustrophobia in the Solar System, or Why the Planets Are So Far Away. I've just published a paper called Subatomic Anxiety, or Entropy: A Failure to Cope?"

"I don't believe you," the girl hisses. "Some men will say anything to get into a girl's apprehensions."

"Now look! You've triggered my Terror of Rejection," wails the man, feathers drooping, scaly legs shaking like jackhammers.

"I knew I'd say the wrong thing. I feel so guilty. So inadequate," sobs the girl, curling into foetal posture, and slowly rocking.